



AGENDA ITEM: Regional Benchmarking for the School Readiness Indicators

BACKGROUND: FTF School Readiness Indicators were chosen to reflect the effectiveness of the funding strategies to improve the lives of children residing in the state of Arizona. The indicators and subsequent benchmarks will be monitored over time in order to determine progress in reaching the indicators. They are not stand alone indicators. They should be a result of collaborations across communities and sectors that impact a child's readiness for entering school and subsequently their life long success. They should also encourage Regional Councils and the State Board in making informed decisions. Each indicator was developed through a collaborative process with FTF Advisory Committees and vetted by the Regional Councils and the State Board. The School Readiness Indicators will be benchmarked by Advisory Committee Sub-Committees charged with identifying the amount of change that should be reasonably expected on each indicator at the state level by 2020.

RECOMMENDATION: The Regional Director presents this as informational purposes only.



School Readiness Indicators

Pinal Regional Partnership Council

Overview

In January of 2012, the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board approved the Pinal Regional Partnership Council's selection of the following six School Readiness Indicators (SRIs) as their top priorities:

Indicator #1 - School Readiness - #/% of children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the developmental domains of social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and motor and physical

Indicator #3 - Quality Early Education – Special Needs - #/% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars

Indicator #5 – Early Identification - % of children with newly identified developmental delays during the kindergarten year

Indicator #7 - Healthy Weight - #/% of children ages 2-4 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index-BMI)

Indicator #9 - Dental Health - #/% of children age 5 with untreated tooth decay

Indicator #10 – Confident Families - % of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being

In Phase 1 School Readiness Indicator benchmarking 2013-2014, the Pinal Regional Partnership Council set benchmarks for the following three SRIs:

Indicator #3 - Quality Early Education – Special Needs

- #/% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars

Indicator #7 - Healthy Weight

- #/% of children ages 2-4 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index-BMI)

Indicator #10 - Confident Families

- % of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being

To discuss, set, and finalize benchmarks for their three chosen Indicators of Quality Early Education – Special Needs, Healthy Weight, and Confident Families, the Regional Partnership Council met in June 2013, July 2013, September 2013 and January 2014, and conducted a public input forum in March 2014. First, the Regional Partnership Council discussed and set benchmarks for the three SRIs. Input was then gathered through an in-person public forum, as well as an online survey. After compilation of public comments, the Regional Partnership Council again met to finalize the recommended benchmarks.

Quality Early Education – Special Needs Indicator Regional Council Benchmarking Discussion and Decision

Initial Discussion 9/17/13

The Regional Partnership Council met on 9/17/13 to consider the Quality Early Education – Special Needs Indicator.

For Quality Early Education – Special Needs, the baseline calculation was provided. The baseline is the number of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars divided by the number of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 1-5 stars; this baseline is essentially the percent of children with special needs/rights in Quality First who are enrolled in 3-5 star care.

Discussion and Decision - Quality Early Education – Special Needs 9/17/13

The Regional Partnership Council discussed the expected progress of providers in Quality First (expected progress is to move from 1 to 2 stars in 2 years and 2 to 3 stars in 2 - 4 years) and upcoming model changes in Quality First such as phasing out of scholarships at the 1 and 2 star levels.

They discussed potential factors that might increase the total pool of providers in Quality First between now and 2020, including quality providers moving to a rating only status, opening slots for full participation, and efforts to fill the open slots for Quality First in the region.

The Regional Partnership Council agreed that all providers who remain in Quality First should attain at least a 3 star rating by 2020, however, they discussed attrition and the time needed and challenges associated with moving from a 1-2 and 2-3 star rating.

The Regional Council discussed the likelihood that the number of children with special needs/rights in need of early education will likely increase in coming years and that some of these children have the greatest need of quality early care and education.

The Council agreed they wanted to “go big” in their aspiration for children with special needs. They agreed that based on expected progress in Quality First, a benchmark of 80% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars by 2020 is attainable. This benchmark is a nearly 50% increase in percentages from their 32% baseline.

Supporting materials can be found in the Pinal appendix.

Proposed Benchmark for Quality Early Education – Special Needs Indicator

80% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars by 2020.

81 children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars out of 101 participating in Quality First overall.

Overview of School Readiness Indicators and Healthy Weight

Initial Discussion 6/18/13

On June 18, 2013, the Pinal Regional Partnership Council met for an overview of benchmarking. The intent of the SRIs and benchmark data sources as well as an initial review of the baseline data for the Healthy Weight Indicator were provided.

Healthy Weight Indicator Regional Council Benchmarking Discussion and Decision

Initial Discussion 7/23/13

The data source, limitations of utilizing WIC data to measure progress for all children, trends in obesity, overweight, and underweight for the region was reviewed with the Regional Council.

Supporting materials can be found in the Pinal appendix.

Healthy Weight Indicator Regional Council Benchmarking Discussion and Decision

Discussion and Decision – Healthy Weight 7/23/13

The Regional Council discussed the limitations of First Things First efforts to impact children's healthy weight. They discussed the many complex factors related to healthy weight including cost of food, challenges with breastfeeding (including workplace policies), and information on healthy activity.

They considered that the WIC population is likely more overweight than the Pinal county general population, however, they agreed that all families have eating and activity habits that can and need to be supported in order to improve.

They agreed that any programmatic approach taken to support healthy weight and activities needs to be culturally sensitive and meet diverse regional needs.

The Regional Council reviewed current community programming related to healthy eating and activity. They discussed the importance of prenatal care, encouraging a focus on exercise and play, and breastfeeding for healthy weight.

Based on ongoing community efforts, including those from First Things First to support healthy eating and activity, the Regional Council discussed a Healthy Weight Indicator Benchmark of 74% of children 2-4 at a healthy weight. This is a 6% increase from the Pinal baseline of 68% of children at a healthy weight by 2020.

Supporting materials can be found in the Pinal appendix.

Proposed Benchmark for Healthy Weight Indicator

74% of 2-4 year olds in Pinal Regional Partnership Council area at a healthy weight by 2020.

Confident Families Indicator Regional Council Benchmarking Discussion and Decision

Initial Discussion 1/14/14

The data source, survey methodology and calculation of the overall Confident Families Indicator from nine key measures, and the baseline data for the region was reviewed with the Regional Partnership Council.

The Confident Families Indicator is measured by the Family and Community Survey. This survey is conducted every three years by a sub-contractor of First Things First and

designed to provide information for Regional Partnership Councils on parent knowledge, skills, and behaviors related to their young children.

The survey contains over sixty questions, some of which were drawn from the national survey, *What Grown-Ups Understand About Child Development*¹. Survey items explore multiple facets of parenting. There are questions on overall knowledge of the importance of early childhood, questions which gauge parent knowledge of specific ages and stages, parent behaviors with their children, as well as parent practices related to utilization of services for their families.

The Family and Community Survey is conducted, for non-tribal Regions, over the phone. Over 3700 Arizona parents with children 0-5 participated in the 2012 Family and Community Survey. In the Pinal region, 200 parents completed the survey. Parents were reached randomly via land-line as well as cell phone. Interviews began with demographic questions and based on information provided by parents on family income, ethnicity, and geography, the sample of parents was carefully balanced to ensure that respondents reflected the diversity of Arizona and the Pinal area in particular.

For the Confident Families Indicator composite score, a sub-set of nine items from the survey were selected. The nine items include parent knowledge, parent self-report of competency and confidence in the parenting of their young children, and parent behaviors, all of which are of key importance to support a young child's safety, health and well-being. Five of the items selected are knowledge-based questions that directly assess a parent's level of knowledge of key developmental areas. Two of the items selected specifically ask parents to rate their level of competency and confidence in their ability to support their child's learning, cognitive development, safety, health and overall well-being. Lastly, two items inquire about parent behaviors around the key early literacy activities of reading, telling stories and singing songs with their children. Six or more responses (out of nine) meeting the cut point comprised the composite score criteria. The scoring was determined based on the national survey key and on early childhood development research and best practice.

Discussion and Decision – Confident Families 1/14/14

The Regional Council discussed the fact that the Family and Community survey is self-report. They agreed that questions 6 and 7, which ask parents to report their competence and confidence directly, were likely to be positively skewed due to reporting bias. However, they agreed that utilizing a bank of nine survey questions to calculate overall competence and confidence was a good approach to tracking knowledge and skills over time.

¹ CIVITAS Initiative, ZERO TO THREE, and BRIO Corporation, Researched by DYG, Inc. 2000. What Grown-ups Understand About Child Development: A National Benchmark Survey.

The Regional Council discussed the estimated number of parents who would need to be supported to attain competence and confidence by 2020 to attain a benchmark of 62%: 2407.

They agreed that the Confident Families Indicator is of critical importance in Pinal County and already existing efforts, partnerships, and infrastructure make an aspirational benchmark attainable. They agreed that large scale changes will reflect the work of all early childhood partners, not just First Things First.

The Pinal baseline is 52% of Families Competent and Confident about Their Ability to Support Their Child's Safety, Health and Well-Being. The Council discussed a benchmark goal of 62% of Families Competent and Confident about Their Ability to Support Their Child's Safety, Health and Well-Being. This is a 62% goal and represents a 10 percentage point improvement by 2020. It is the same as the state benchmark of 10 percent improvement. Based on their discussions of community assets and efforts, the Regional Council agreed that 62% was an attainable goal for the Pinal regional area.

Supporting materials can be found in the Pinal appendix.

Proposed Benchmark for Confident Families Indicator

62% Families Competent and Confident about Their Ability to Support Their Child's Safety, Health and Well-Being by 2020.

Public Input on Initial Benchmark Targets for Indicators

Public comment was solicited in two ways: in-person community forums and an online survey.

Public Input Forum:

On 3/12/14, an SRI benchmark public forum was held in Casa Grande to gather community input on initial benchmark targets set by the Pinal Regional Council. The agenda was as follows:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Overview of Process to Recommend Regional Benchmarks
3. How and Why Benchmarks Are Used
4. Review and Discuss Proposed Regional Benchmarks for Priority School Readiness Indicators
5. Process and Timeline for Finalizing Recommended Regional Level Benchmarks
6. Questions

There were fifteen attendees: eleven members of the public (Laura Friedman, Esther Turner, Lindsey Wicks, Diana Pompa, Susan Fender, Linda Williams-Tuenge, Melissa Busby, Haley Hult, Dixie Harvey, Tami Hoover, and Jack Beveridge), the Pinal regional director, Aimee Kempton, Pinal regional staff members, Lois Homewytewa and Katrina DeVinny, and the facilitator, Amy Kemp.

After introductions, the forum began with an overview of the purpose of SRIs and the statewide and regional processes of setting benchmarks, including the 9 priority roles of First Things First and their relation to the 10 SRIs. There was discussion on the SRI process and additional clarification that SRIs are tools to monitor changes in statewide and regional populations of children and not evaluation tools. Attendees were informed that SRIs are used to measure progress in the early childhood system overall and help identify priorities.

There was a brief review of the status of all Indicators, identification of the six Indicators prioritized by the Pinal Regional Council as well as the three benchmarks that the Council had set. Utilizing the baseline and benchmark data for Pinal Regional Council, the group reviewed the considerations, discussions and decisions of the Pinal Council on the following prioritized Indicators:

Indicator #3 - Quality Early Education – Special Needs

- #/% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars

Indicator #7 - Healthy Weight

- #/% of children ages 2-4 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index-BMI)

Indicator #10 - Confident Families

- % of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being

There was extensive discussion related to the Quality Early Education - Special Needs Indicator. The group discussed the fact that the benchmark relates to Quality First only, not all early care and education accessed by families of children with special needs/rights. Also discussed was the hope that more early care and education providers will be able to enter into the Quality First system, especially as some providers attain rating only status. It was also agreed that providers who have attained quality should continue to be supported. The balance between ensuring that providers that have attained quality have adequate financial supports to maintain quality and the desire to

open slots for new providers was noted. Also noted was the necessity that early care and education providers reach a status where they can sustain quality in early care and education without intensive supports.

One participant asked how early care and education providers are supported in their efforts to improve developmental screening for children. There was group discussion of Pinal partnerships relating to developmental screening, free Ages and Stages trainings, and a new online screening reporting system that assists early childhood teachers and other professionals.

Related to the Healthy Weight Indicator, there was group discussion about the limitations of using WIC data to measure healthy weight for all children. Also discussed were community efforts related to information on child health and family nutrition. The regional director expressed great enthusiasm and support, on behalf of the Council, for the inclusion of the Healthy Weight Indicator. She pointed especially to efforts aimed at working with “non-traditional” partners, such as employers and the faith community, to increase awareness and resources related to healthy weight. Additionally, the regional director stated that policy changes, such as those supporting breastfeeding in the workplace, are crucial to the improvement of healthy weight in the region. It was also agreed that good nutrition and activity are part of quality education.

Related to the Confident Families Indicator, there was group discussion about the limitations of utilizing a self-report survey as a measure of the Indicator. Specifically, there were concerns about the validity of questions 6 and 7. It was agreed that these questions most certainly would include reporting bias, however, utilization of seven other questions in the calculation of the Confident Families Indicator would decrease the potential for negative impact of methodological problems with any one or two questions. The group also discussed the three year Family and Community Survey data collection timeline, as well as additional topics surveyed but not utilized in the Confident Families Indicator, such as parenting challenges and developmental stages.

After review of the Pinal Regional Council’s discussion and decisions, no changes were suggested.

Online Survey:

An online survey for the Pinal Regional Partnership Council was launched on March 3rd and was open for 18 days. Utilizing email contact lists for Pinal region, the survey was sent to community and Regional Council members. The survey provided Pinal regional benchmark targets for Indicators Quality Early Education-Special Needs, Healthy Weight and Confident Families Indicators. Respondents were asked two questions related to each benchmark:

How much do you agree that the proposed benchmark for this priority School Readiness Indicator in your community/region is ambitious enough to positively impact outcomes for children in Arizona?

How much do you agree that the proposed benchmark for this priority School Readiness Indicator is realistic and achievable?

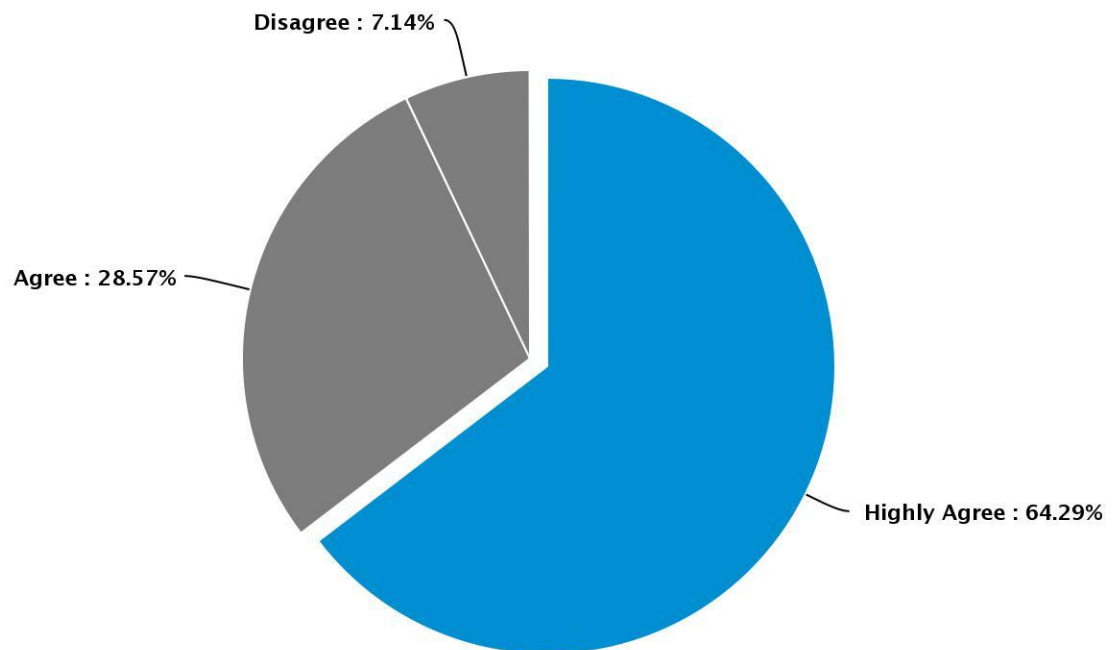
There was also the option to provide additional comments for each benchmark.

For the Pinal regional online survey:

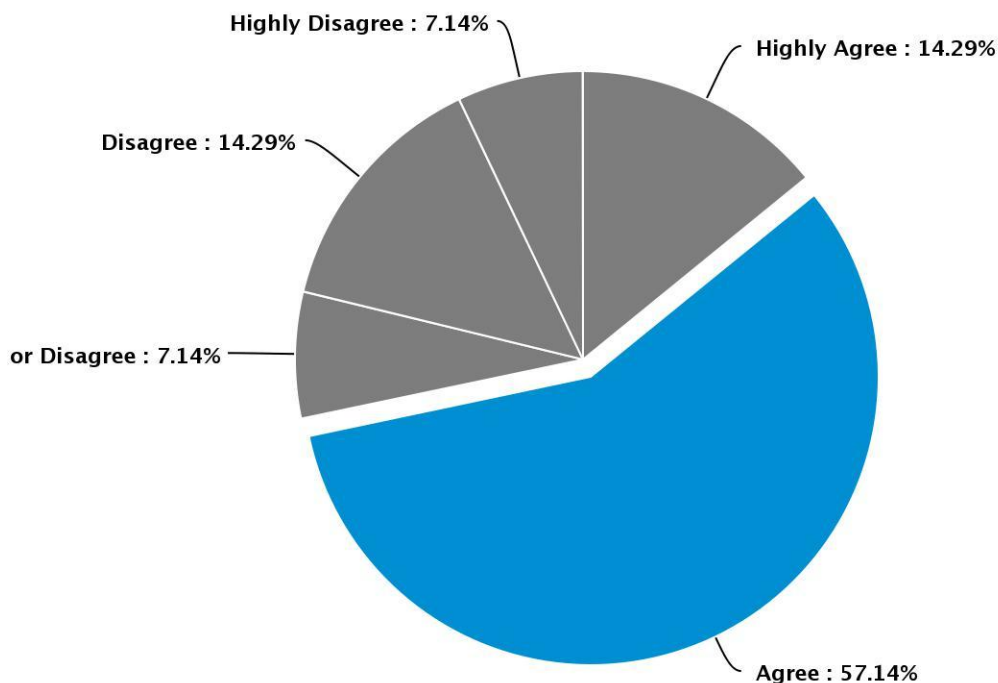
- 30 respondents viewed the survey
- 25 respondents started the survey
- 14 respondents completed the survey

For Quality Early Education– Special Needs Benchmark: 80% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars by 2020.

- 93% of respondents (13 of 14) highly agreed or agreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) disagreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.



- 72% of respondents (10 of 14) agreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) neither agreed or disagreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 14% of respondents (2 of 14) disagreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) highly disagreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.



There were three additional comments for this benchmark. One comment noted the small number of licensed child care providers in the Pinal community and the need for outreach and support for unlicensed home care providers where most children are likely receiving their early care and education.

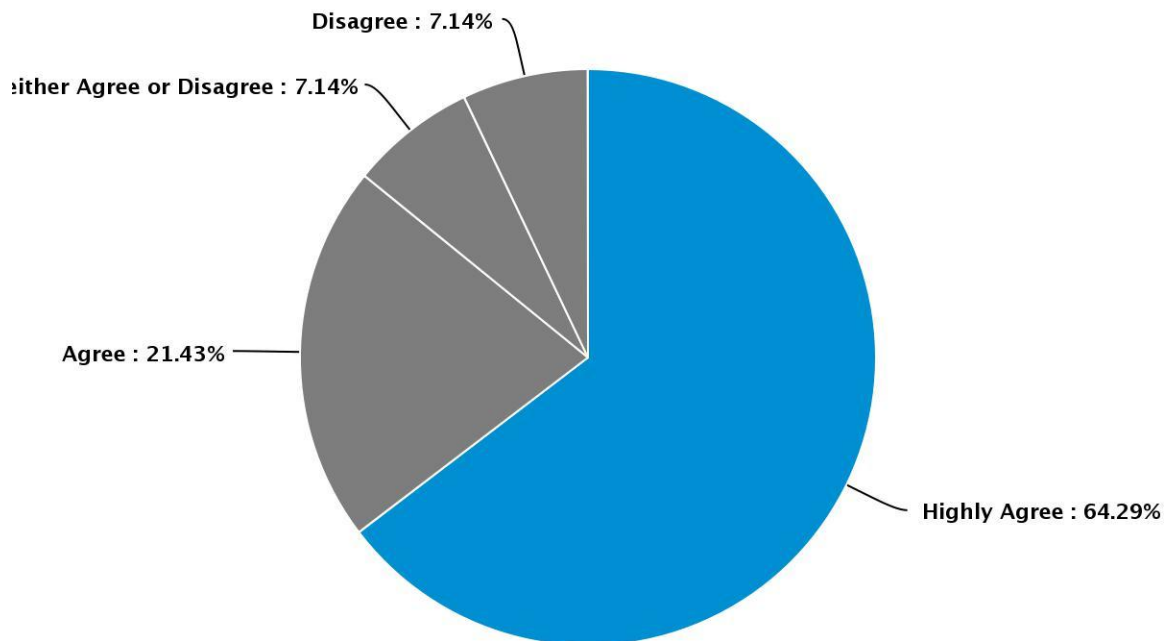
The second comment stated that given the small number of providers already at a 3-5 star level, the 80% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars by 2020 benchmark target seems unrealistic.

The final comment noted the need for high standards for young children and the importance of everyone helping to achieve the goal. It was noted that a teacher cannot be expected to teach a 5-6 year old the skills that they should have learned at 3-4 years.

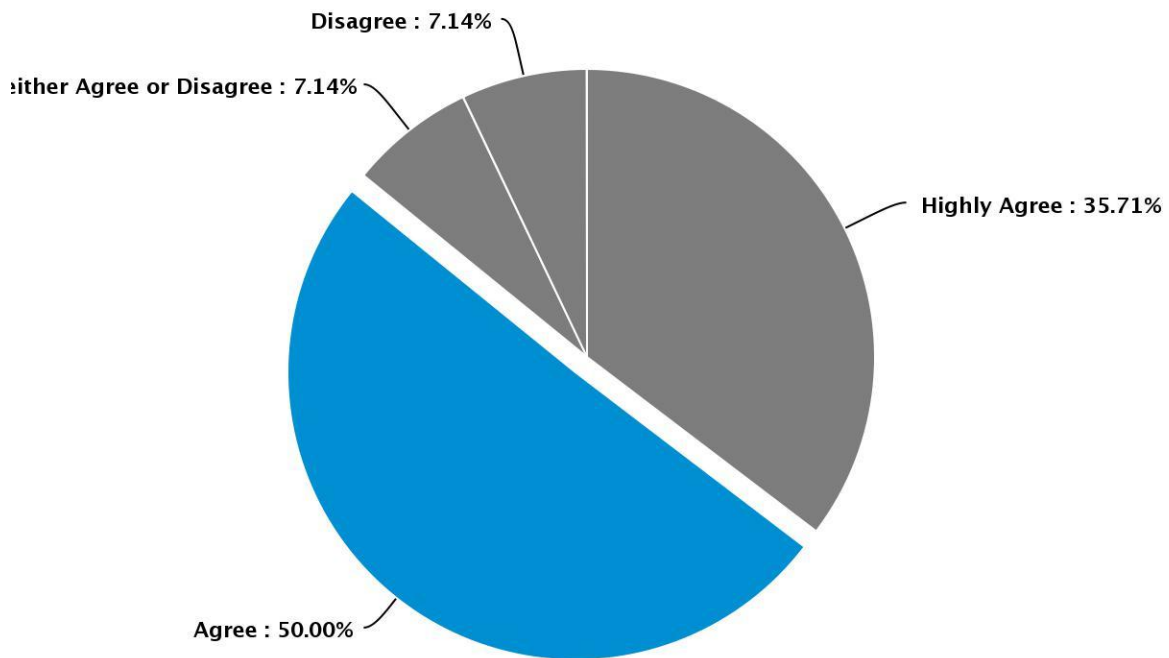
The participant also likes the Parents As Teachers program and suggested it be expanded. In addition to expansion it was noted that everyone in the community needs to know it is available. Finally, it was noted that parents don't always know "what they don't know", especially about typical development of young children.

For Healthy Weight Benchmark: 74% of 2-4 year olds at a healthy weight by 2020.

- 86% of respondents (12 of 14) highly agreed or agreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) neither agreed nor disagreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) disagreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.



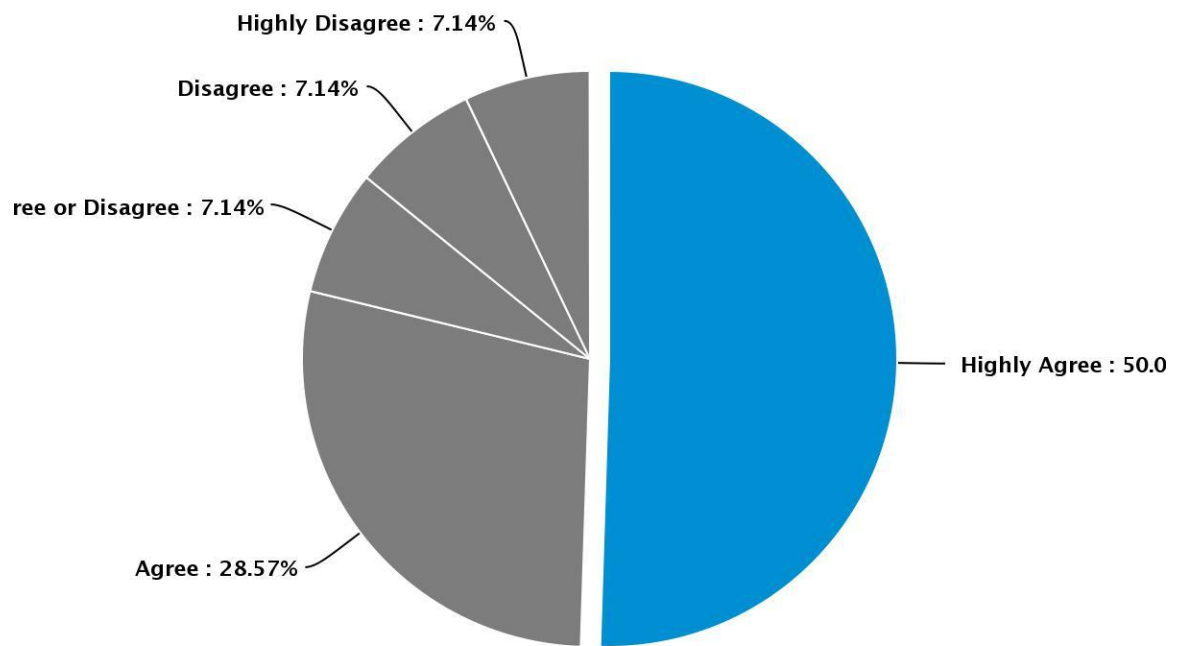
- 86% of respondents (12 of 14) highly agreed or agreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) neither disagreed nor agreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) disagreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.



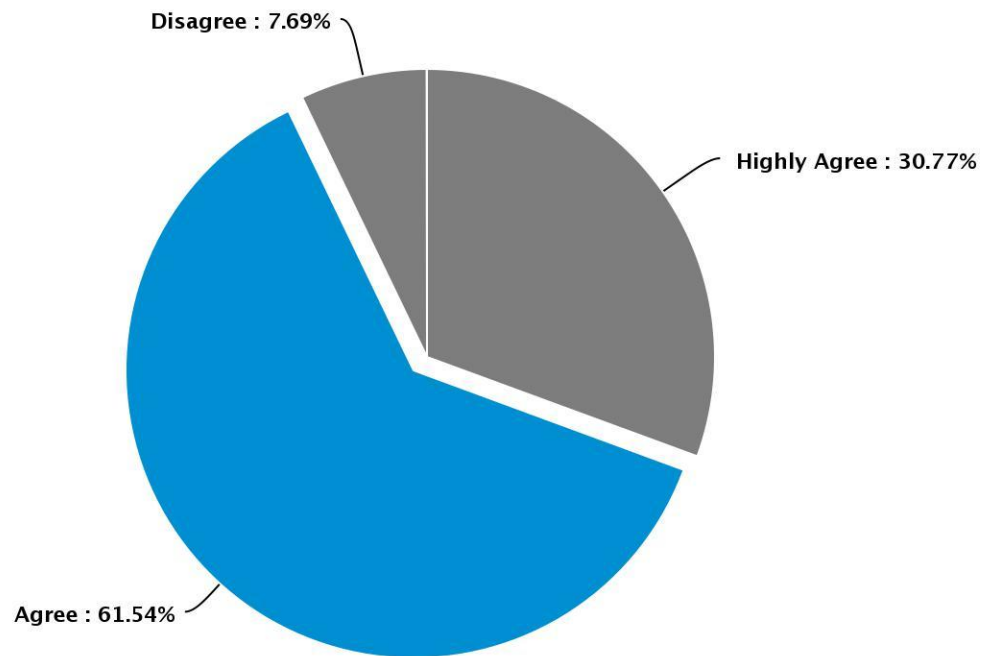
There were no additional comments for this benchmark.

For Confident Benchmark: 62% of Families Competent and Confident about Their Ability to Support Their Child's Safety, Health and Well-Being by 2020.

- 79% of respondents (11 of 14) agreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) neither disagreed nor agreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) disagreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.
- 7% of respondents (1 of 14) highly disagreed that the benchmark is ambitious enough.



- 92% of respondents (12 of 13) highly agreed or agreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.
- 8% of respondents (1 of 13) disagreed that the benchmark is realistic and achievable.



There was one additional comment for this benchmark. The participant noted that the benchmark is realistic, but the data are likely to contain self-report bias. It was noted that without some basic knowledge it is possible to erroneously assume you are doing a great job.